

New Mexico Young America Football League

Coaching 101

Fall 2016

1. What are You Trying to Accomplish?
 - a. The New Mexico Young America Football League (NMYAFL) was formed to teach competitive youth football. You can't teach competitive football unless you are prepared. You must develop a program that addresses three areas: fun, competitiveness and coaching. Young players quit because they are not having fun, competitive imbalance or they are poorly coached. Hopefully, guidance contained here can help you solve the many issues facing a head coach.
2. You Must Be Educated in More than Football
 - a. Take time to educate yourself. Head Coaching is not entirely about Xs and Os. It is an important part of coaching, but being a head coach is much more. A head coach fills many roles: he is, in effect, a small business manager. He must manage coaches, parents, players and spectators. He must manage a budget and team finances, i.e. fundraising, apparel, banquet expenditures, etc. He must hire assistants and replace them when needed. He must manage an organization that may include a cheerleading team in addition to a football team. He answers to the league and to the parents. He must do all these things and teach Xs and Os to the players. The job of head coach in the NMYAFL is extremely demanding.
 - b. How do you get an education in our league? You attend NMYAFL coaches meetings, complete online training at USA Football, attend Heads Up training sessions, seek mentors and study coaches that exemplify all the best aspects of coaching.
3. Develop a Philosophy
 - a. A philosophy is essential to any endeavor. You must have goals and a plan to meet those goals. With the league's stated purpose to teach competitive football, your philosophy should be broader than simply winning every game. Part of teaching competitive football means developing your players in a way that allows them to **compete**. Competing does not mean winning at all costs. A sound philosophy would be to maximize the potential of your team by prioritizing your valuable practice time and your teaching progressions. Your coaching philosophy should be clear to your players, parents and your coaches. A clearly stated philosophy will help maintain your team's focus throughout the season.

4. Build a Staff

- a. Building your staff is one of the more critical tasks you will face. Your staff will include coaches, a Team Mom/Dad, video/still photographer, statistician and hydration personnel (water boys). (We'll cover Team Mom/Dad in the next section) Your coaches should be carefully chosen. Mistakes in selecting your coaching staff can ruin an entire season for you, your players and your parents.
- b. Your staff should be structured with the head coach at the top, a special teams coach, an offensive coordinator, and a defensive coordinator directly under you. Under these coordinator positions you would normally have assistant coaches in charge of specific player positions. You should create a "Coach Contract" that clearly defines your expectations and lines of authority. It shall also clarify limits to authority. You are the final authority for all issues related to your team. When you have a coaching staff that is not clear on this issue you are asking for trouble. This does not mean that you micro manage every coach. Remember, you are a manager. You should delegate areas of responsibility down the chain. This process is much easier when your expectations and plans are made clear to your staff.
- c. Your plans should be clearly explained for the season and for each game during the season. A preseason staff meeting can outline the season schedule and goals prior to the beginning of games. During the season, meeting with your staff at the beginning of each week is necessary to organize each week's plan. Your staff can develop more detailed plans for each practice in order to meet the overall plan for the week.
- d. Disagreements are normal and healthy. Listen to your assistant coaches suggestions and ask yourself if their suggestions contribute to your philosophy. Remember, your staff is there to help you maximize the potential of each player and create a competitive team. When you have a staff member who disagrees with your direction and refuses to follow your lead, you must act swiftly to either remove or redirect that coach. Open insubordination cannot be tolerated. Your staff must act as one in front of players and parents. The presentation of a united staff instills confidence in your players and parents. This alone makes you a better team.

5. Find a Team Mom

- a. One of the most important positions you will fill is that of Team Mom or Dad. An easy solution to finding a Team Mom would be to appoint your spouse, but **DON'T DO IT**. The appointment of your spouse creates far more problems than it solves. It creates a key position on your staff that will not be viewed as strong and independent; two characteristics that are important to the success of a Team Mom. It hampers your ability to handle finances properly. (See Chapter 6.)

- b. The Team Mom's duties can span a broad area, and you need to make sure that area is clearly defined. Your Team Mom will, ideally, be the direct connection between you and your parents. She will be interacting with most parents daily while you are coaching. She will be able to relay information from you to the parents and from the parents to you. This does not mean that as the leader of the team you should not also interact with parents. Your parental interaction should come before or after practice, never during. Your Team Mom should be one of the most trusted members of the team and should be given sufficient authority to act for the benefit of the team. The Team Mom may handle hundreds of small things that must be done to be an efficient and well run small business and must have the authority and latitude to do so. The authority you pass to your Team Mom must be clear to you and her and your parents. When you and your Team Mom function with one message to all, things go much smoother for everyone.
- c. Your Team Mom's job is nearly as demanding as yours and she will need help. She needs your loyalty just as you need hers. You must ensure she has all the volunteers she needs to fulfill her duties. Remember, her duties are defined by you. The more she can take on the easier your job will be. She typically handles most team communications. She manages most of your fundraising and banking details. She arranges banquets, team photos and coordinates with parents, cheerleaders.
- d. If you find yourself at odds with your Team Mom you must correct the situation immediately. When a coach and a Team Mom are not operating in concert, the fault can usually be traced back to a failure, on your part, to explain your expectations of the position clearly. If you have clearly explained your expectations and given authority to your Team Mom to act, and you cannot seem to be on the same page, it may be time to replace her. Remember, all positions on your team are your responsibility. When any one of the people you place into your organization fails to follow your direction you will be the one held accountable. It is your job as a head coach to create an organization that supports your philosophy in achieving NMYAFL's goals of teaching competitive football.

6. Team Finances

- a. NMYAFL's rules give you plenty of guidance on handling finances. Some of the key issues you need to stay on top of are: 1) you are 100% responsible for all team financial issues. 2) you or your Team Mom must be prepared to open your financial records to any parent upon request. You also need to clearly understand the difference between fundraising and sponsorships. Here is, very briefly, what you need to know. Sponsorship is the fee your team owes the league prior to the first game of each season. This fee is paid directly to NMYAFL and is tax deductible. You may seek donors for this fee as soon as the Coaches Selection Committee awards you a team. You may not use players/cheerleaders in any way

to collect this fee/donation. Money cannot be donated to NMYAFL and funneled back to your team. Fundraising may begin after team consolidation and you have had your parent meeting. You may use players/cheerleaders to collect money in your fundraising efforts. In 2016, the league added a new process that requires you or your Team Mom to submit all "team" fundraising activities via a form on the NMYAFL website for review. In other words, bake sales, car washes and pancake breakfasts etc.... need to be submitted via this on-line form. You should assume your activity is approved unless you are contacted by the league and informed otherwise.

- b. You should clearly state to your parents the team budget and fundraising plans. The team fundraising plans should be agreed upon with your Team Mom prior to revealing them to your parents. There should be buy-in not only from your Team Mom but also from your parents surrounding team fundraising goals. Ideally, your plans will be enthusiastically supported by most of your parents. It would not be unusual for one or two parents to object, but they should accept the majority's endorsement of your plan. If you get broad opposition to a plan it's time for you to reconsider. Do not make the mistake of believing that you are a dictator and everyone must accept your decrees when dealing with money.
- c. NMYAFL rules allow you to ask for \$28.50 from each football participant and \$35.00 from each cheer participant. At no time, may you require money from parents in excess of the amounts previously listed. All requested funds that exceed these amounts should be raised via donations and fundraising activities. You will find a wide range of financial security among the parents on your team. You do not want to create a financial hardship for a family due to monetary and fundraising requests. Please note that whether a family participates in fundraising or not, their player or cheerleader shall receive the same items as every other player or cheerleader on the team. You may not withhold anything from a player or cheerleader because their parents did not help with fundraising. This is why you are cautioned to keep your budget plans realistic and avoid extravagant purchases for your team. Hard feelings are created when some families feel they are contributing more than their fair share, while other non-contributing families reap the same benefits of the contributing families' hard work. When you have a cheer and football team, finances become more difficult because of perceived differences between football and cheer. You may combine cheer and football finances or operate them completely independent of each other. It is your choice, and one size does not fit all.
- d. You can carry funds over from year to year in your team checking account. Following your varsity season, you must equally distribute all remaining funds to each participant's family. Prior to the start of each season, you should clearly explain how you will handle left over funds at season's end. You should also explain how you will treat any participant's family, regarding financial

contributions, if their player/cheerleader leaves the team before the end of the season.

7. Volunteers

- a. We've already discussed in detail your primary volunteer, the Team Mom. Now we'll cover many of the other volunteers you'll need to effectively and efficiently run your team.
 - i. Six Play Counter – Each player on your team is required, by league rules, to play six plays in each half of each game. Most head coaches have a parent track all the players on the team and ensure that each gets the required playing time. This parent should be constantly updating you on the status of the six play players. Failure to comply with this rule is probably the number one issue that gets our coaches in trouble
 - ii. “Chain Gang” – During games, the visiting team supplies the volunteers that will run the down and distance markers per the line judge's instructions. You should plan for this task and designate three parents in advance of the game. Ideally, you would schedule parents for the entire season.
 - iii. Videographer/photographer – Most coaches want video from the end zone of their team's games. You will use this video to look for areas to improve your team. Also, still photos are normally a part of your team's website or end of season celebration.
 - iv. Social media/website manager – More and more teams use social media and a website to communicate. This is an excellent way to quickly reach your entire team. It's also place to show video and pictures of your team. There are downsides to social media and you should make sure that you explain your expectations to all parents and players. Social media should not be used to criticize any member of your “Team.” Your expectations of the constructive use of social media outlets should be clearly explained to the team.
 - v. Snacks/Drinks – At half-time of each game, your players may need a little nutritional boost for the second half. Teams may bring a snack to be handed out to players at half-time. Teams may also hand out snacks and a drink following games. Team Moms are usually given the task of scheduling these half-time and postgame snacks. Be mindful of any allergies your players may have and plan accordingly.
 - vi. Water– A properly badged assistant coach should be used to fill and deliver water bottles to players during time outs during games. You may also task the job of bringing several gallons of water in large water jugs to each game. Older teams on hot days will need 6-9 gallons of water whereas young teams on cool days won't even need 5 gallons of water. It's always

best to have too much water rather than not enough. Most game sites do not have potable water.

- b. Volunteers are critical to a well-managed team. You need to be a good recruiter and manager to get parents to help in all these tasks.

8. Parent/Player Meetings and Contracts

- a. NMYAFL requires you to hold a parent meeting following team consolidation and prior to the start of the season. Many of the issues discussed in earlier chapters should be discussed at this meeting.
 - i. This meeting is your opportunity to introduce yourself to your parents and share your coaching philosophy.
 - ii. You will also go over your parent contract in great detail especially noting important areas the parents need to understand.
 - iii. You can also answer parent's questions regarding the program.
 - iv. Here is your chance to find all the volunteers you'll need for the season.
- b. Contracts - Have a well-written contract that specifically addresses your expectations of assistant coaches, team mom, volunteers, players and parents. Be SPECIFIC!
 - i. Reach out to other coaches to see what types of contracts they have used.
 - ii. Most challenges coaches face come from people on their team not knowing schedules and expectations.
 - iii. Make sure your contract contains guidelines for disciplinary actions involving anyone affiliated with your team.
- c. Parent Contract (details) – The contract is presented to each parent in writing, and you should get a signed receipt for this contract. If a parent refuses to sign the contract, explain to them their signature simply acknowledges receipt of the information and they are not entering into a legally binding contract. This is important as issues may arise at a later date. Parent signatures allow you to bring out the contract and point to the section that covers the issue in question. Often a problem can be resolved with this simple solution. A well written contract is necessary even for those that think their parents would never create a problem within their team. You do not want to find yourself in the middle of a season, wishing you had a contract. Take your time and develop a contract that works for you. At a minimum, a contract should cover the following:
 - i. Coaching philosophy
 - ii. Practice time and location
 - iii. Expectations of players and parents during all facets of the season
 - iv. How parents are to communicate with you
 - v. Disciplinary actions
 - vi. Descriptions of your schemes
 - vii. How positions will be assigned

viii. Fundraising deadlines

9. Team Management

- a. Clearly define the roles and expectations of the coaches, parents, players and volunteers in all situations and team functions.
- b. Clearly define the time considerations for all team functions. You must be considerate of your entire team's time.
- c. Functions of the team include:
 - i. Fundraising
 1. Do not expect everyone to participate in fundraising efforts.
 2. All players must receive the same items from team fundraising regardless of their participation in the fundraising efforts.
 3. Limit your fundraising to a few actionable items.
 4. Attempt to complete your fundraising activities prior to the beginning of regular season games.
 5. Be specific with your team on what the fundraising efforts go towards.
 - ii. Practice
 1. Clearly define where practices will be held and what time practices will take place.
 2. The head coach should provide a daily practice plan including periods for warm up, special teams, individual skill instruction, team instruction and water breaks.
 3. Practices can last no more than two hours. When your scheduled time to dismiss practice arrives, promptly dismiss practice as a part of your time consideration for your team.
 4. You may practice up to six days per week prior to the beginning of games, four days per week during the regular season, and five days per week during the playoffs.
 5. Review the NMYAFL rule book for other practice rules and regulations.
 - iii. Games
 1. Clearly define when your games are, where they are played, what time players should arrive, and what they should be wearing. Use cones to clearly define a players and coaches section on the sideline of the game day field.
 2. Talk to your entire team structure concerning their roles on game days. Allow your team parent to assist in directing volunteers to their various positions.
 - a. Parents should be spectators and cheerleaders for the team. Talk to your parents about staying in one spot to

watch the game. Parents that pace the sideline during the game often leave their role as a spectator and turn into an influencer of their player, coaches, officials etc.

- b. Players should be engaged in the game on the field and on the sideline. Their job is to take instruction from their coaches and play with focus and effort.
- c. Coaches are responsible for execution of the game plan through communication with the staff and to the players. The head coach is also responsible for all activities on the sideline, including spectator behavior.
- d. Volunteers must stay within the boundaries of their roles during a game. For example, a member of the chain crew cannot become an influencer during the game.

iv. Pictures

1. Team pictures have several dates and times available. Work with the team parent to schedule a date and time for your team.
2. Clearly explain where the pictures are, what time the players should arrive, and what uniform they should be wearing.

v. Post Season Banquet

1. Set a specific date and time following the final game of the season. Any items distributed at the banquet must be given to all players per the NMYAFL guidelines.
2. Banquet settings and activities can vary based on the wants and needs of the team.
3. Use this time to recognize the effort of the entire team structure and wrap up the year. You may also use the time to individually speak to your players and parents about the player's progression during the recently completed season.

vi. Cheer Competitions

1. If your team includes a cheer team, cheer competitions must be added to the football schedule. Clearly define your expectation that players attend these competitions. Failure by the head coach to attend cheer competitions can result in disciplinary action.

10. Selecting Offensive and Defensive Systems

- a. Choose to use a system based on:
 - i. Previous working knowledge and comfort level
 - ii. Personnel
 - iii. Commitment to local school's systems
 - iv. Utilization of another program's systems

- b. Once systems are chosen, commit to their implementation. The head coach must convey a strong belief in the systems to the players, coaches and parents.
- c. All systems should use a building block approach to implementation based on age, skill level and execution.
 - i. Age: Beginning football players will have a hard time understanding formations and plays. Simple concepts can be expanded as players get older.
 - ii. Skill Level: The motor functions necessary to run, throw and catch will vary from player to player. Ensure the systems are in-line with the ability of the players.
 - iii. Execution: Create a foundation of base plays and base defensive alignment that can be executed throughout the season. Do not add more into your installation until the team can execute your base packages.
- d. Offensive Scheme Considerations:
 - i. Snap under center, shotgun, or both.
 - ii. 1, 2 or 3 running back system.
 - iii. Tight formations, spread formation, or both.
 - iv. Run to pass ratio.
 - v. Philosophy of few plays/multiple formations or few formations/multiple plays.
- e. Defensive Scheme Considerations:
 - i. 3, 4, or 5 man front.
 - ii. Number of Coverages.
 - iii. Number of Blitzes.
 - iv. Alignment and blitzes called by coach or set to Offensive formations.

11. Player Positions

- a. Individual playing time and where individuals are played will be a source of conflict within your team if not done properly. Clearly set expectations with the parents and players on roles and playing time.
- b. Players should be slotted into offensive, defensive and special teams positions that best utilize the player's skill set and provide the greatest benefit to the team.
- c. Players can be slotted based on:
 - i. Your previous knowledge of the player.
 - 1. The player has played football on your team or another team where his/her abilities have been viewed.
 - 2. The player has played in other activities where a coach has been able to view his/her abilities.
 - ii. No previous knowledge of the player.

1. The player needs to be evaluated in early practices for proper placement. Evaluation should include footwork, running, passing, catching, kicking and tackling.
- d. The head coach should work with his assistant coaches to create a depth chart for offense, defense, and special teams. The depth chart should be reviewed and adjusted weekly based on player performance, effort, and injuries.
- e. Players out of position.
 - i. The longer a player plays, the more difficult it will be to slot the player into the wrong position.
 - ii. Players that have played multiple years may be able to move positions during the year if they appear to be slotted in the wrong position.
 - iii. New players will have a difficult time learning new positions during the year. If a new player appears to be slotted incorrectly, you may have to wait until the next season to introduce him/her to a new position.

12. Scouting

- a. Scouting your opponent will give your team the best opportunity for success during a game. Scouting takes the guess work out of what offense, defense and special teams looks your opponent will run.
- b. As a priority, your team should invest in a portable video camera and tripod to film your opponents. Per NMYAFL rules, you may only film from behind the end zone, unless you are playing in a stadium.
- c. Upload video to a hosting site and arrange to trade film with opposing coaches if possible.
- d. Primary scouting takeaways:
 - i. Opponent's personnel
 1. Note primary players and their positions.
 - ii. Opponent's offensive formations and plays
 1. Draw up all plays and formations and put them on cards for a practice scout team.
 2. Note the plays that are run more frequently.
 3. Note whether plays are run to the strength of the formation.
 4. Note whether plays are run to the wide side of the field.
 5. Note plays that are run in specific down and distance situations by looking at third and short, third and long, and goal line plays.
 - iii. Opponent's defensive formations and blitzes
 1. Draw up all defensive fronts and blitzes and put them on cards for a practice scout team.
 2. Note the defensive front that is run most frequently.
 3. Note whether the front changes based on offensive formation or down and distance considerations.

4. Note the type and frequency of blitzes. Are blitzes called to the strength of the formation or to the wide side of the field?
 5. Note the primary coverage used and whether it changes.
- iv. Opponent's Special Teams
1. Draw up all special teams and put them on cards for practice scout team. Your opponent may not use aspects of the kicking game, which is worth knowing as well.
 2. Note the kicking distance of the opponent when punting or kicking off.
 3. Does your opponent utilize the kicking game following a touchdown?
 4. Who are the kick returners used by your opponent and how are they aligned?
 5. Do they use any specific blocking schemes in the return game?
 6. Do they attempt to block kicks, or attempt a misdirection (fake) play in the punting game?
- e. Scouting tendencies of your opponent will help you call specific offensive and defensive plays at the right time. Tendency reports can be compiled through specific software or a statistician that is good with a spreadsheet.

13. Game Management

- a. Have a plan going in. Use play sheets and make sure your assistant coaches all have copies. You can't just call offensive and defensive plays and hope to be successful. A part of success can be attributed to simply being organized. Everyone should have a role for game day; from who is bringing water to who is calling plays. All jobs are critical.
- b. YAFL rules mandate that all players are to play 6 plays per half. Your play counter should keep you abreast of players who may be lacking plays.
- c. One method of properly distributing players to positions to satisfy your 6 play rule is by having multiple offenses. A team can have their 11 best players on defense then you use everyone else on offense. For example, a team can have a black, silver and white offensive package. Everyone who plays defense is also on black offense. Silver and white will substitute with players of the black offense so your first drive will be comprised of black and silver. If the offense runs six plays you can then sub in white for silver and run 6 more plays and finish the play requirements early for the first half. If you use the same philosophy in the 3rd quarter, your results should be similar. To keep continuity between the offenses on the field, your center and quarterback should not rotate out. Have a backup for each position but only use them when necessary.
- d. Managing your sidelines is also your responsibility. You are responsible for all parties connected to your team, including fans. Establish good, working

relationships with the officials. Your lead should be followed by your staff. The only person who addresses officials during a game should be you, the head coach. Have written expectations for how coaches are to conduct themselves during a game.

- e. Parents and spectators are also part of your responsibility on game day. You should start your season by indicating through parent meetings and your parent contract how they are to cheer. Use examples like: "Parents, please be mindful of screaming 'They're not blocking!' while on offense. You could be standing next to the parent of a lineman who'll take offense to your criticism of their child. You are to CHEER, not criticize the performance of your team." That job is best left to coaches.
- f. During a game, you should be approachable by your auxiliary staff because your responsibility doesn't only lie on the field but on the sidelines as well.

14. End of Year Festivities

- a. There are numerous ways to celebrate the end of a season. The deeper into the season a team makes it, the greater the celebration should be. Wherever you choose, you cannot have alcohol present. A multitude of establishments and city parks can accommodate your end of year festivities. Make the celebrations about completing goals, celebrating the TEAM, not any individual achievements. Have your team mom contact other moms to see what they have done if they need any suggestions. As with the rest of your program, reinvention of the wheel is not necessary when you have others you can reach out to.

15. Equipment

Player equipment

- a. Player equipment should be within the guidelines of the rules. Make sure to check player equipment during the season as it tends to break, come loose, etc.
- b. If you want to keep uniformity in your player equipment, make sure to address that with your parents prior to the season starting and equipment having been purchased.

Practice equipment

- a. It is highly recommended that you have practice equipment. You can use things such as cones, speed ladders, round and half-round dummies, blocking shields and linemen boards just to name a few. Tools and spare parts are also items you should have at practice.

Gameday equipment

- a. Make sure to have tools and spare parts to replace any items that may get lost or broken on gameday. You should have a first aid kit as well. Athletic tape can also help players stay on the field if they suffer a minor injury.

16. Recruiting

- a. Places to recruit are plentiful. It is recommended that you do not recruit players from other teams and honor the fact that coaching is, and should be, a brotherhood.
- b. Your local elementary and middle schools are a great place to recruit. Go in, meet the administration and get flyers out to the grade levels.
- c. Your other local youth sports leagues will also be a good place to find new players. The only challenge you may face is if the leagues run concurrently.
- d. Your neighborhood is another place. Pay attention to the kids in the neighborhood. Meet them, get to know their parents.

Head Coach Checklist

- In this section you will find a detailed checklist of some things a head coach must do and some things a head coach should do.

- Complete and submit head coach application online at nmyafl.org. You will receive an email confirmation that it was received by the Coach Selection Committee (CSC) and will be reviewed.
- You will then receive an email regarding your interview. After a successful interview the CSC will instruct you to continue to the next step.
- Follow online instructions for the Background Check. Log into nmyafl.org, under Coaches Background Check Tile.
- Complete required nmyafl.org Coach Quiz. Log into nmyafl.org, then you'll find the Coach Quiz under the "Coaches" tile then under "Football Coaches Items" tile then under "Football Coach Quiz" tile.
- Create a "Youth Coach" membership at USAFootball.com. Tackle Coaches: Register for a Youth Coach membership at "usafootball.com" using discount "promo" code provided by NMYAFL. Call NMYAFL if you don't know your code. After you have established a membership search for "Level 1 Tackle Certification" and complete this online training. Make sure that you print or take a picture of the certificate the website issues upon completion of this training. You will be required to present this document to NMYAFL.
- Flag Coaches: Register for your free USA Football Membership at <https://www.nflflag.com/form/coach> and complete the FLAG Coaching Certification Course.
- After completing ALL of the above you may be awarded a team. If so, the CSC will notify you and you can continue to the next step.

- You will be required to have a NMYAFL Coach Badge prior to the first day of practice. These badges will be issued by NMYAFL. The badge costs \$5. Please bring your printed USA Football Level 1 Tackle Certificate of completion and a government issued photo ID.
- You must find a place to conduct your team's practices. Your practice park must be within the high school boundaries of the school your team is associated with. Once you've decided on a park you must submit that information to the NMYAFL via the website. There is a submit tile under the "Coaches" tile then under the tile, "Football Coaches Items", then under "Submit Practice Park".
- Now it's time to get a copy of your roster. You can get a roster under the "Coaches" tile then under the tile, "Football Coaches Items", then under "Football Rosters".
- Begin to select your assistant coaches.
- Plan and write a contract for parents and players
- Begin to search for "Team Sponsorship" money.
- Meet with your coaches to cover your philosophy and plan your practices
- Contact every family on your roster and develop a way to communicate
- Just prior to the first practice hold your parent meeting